United Nations S/2017/625

Security Council

Distr.: General
21 July 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 18 July 2017 from the Permanent Representatives of Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Sweden and Uruguay, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, hereby share a summary note of the meeting held on 27 February 2017 on the Lake Chad basin crisis (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Olof **Skoog**
Ambassador

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**
Ambassador

(*Signed*) Elbio **Rosselli**
Ambassador

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Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

Summary of the meeting on the Lake Chad basin crisis, 27 February 2017

On 27 February, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security held its first meeting of 2017 to discuss the Lake Chad basin crisis, ahead of the five-day visiting mission by the Security Council to Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria. The members received a briefing from the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Nigeria and representatives of the United Nations country team, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

The members were particularly interested in the United Nations approach to the demobilization and reintegration of women and girls coming out of association with Boko Haram; the need to ensure that any accountability initiatives were responsive to women and girls, including following up on allegations of sexual abuse in camps for internally displaced persons; the extent of the United Nations regular engagement with women's civil society organizations on peace and security matters, in particular early warning, national and regional counter-terrorism efforts and efforts to prevent violent extremism; United Nations views on current discussions on durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons and how their return, whether forced or voluntary, was managed; the extent of support to the Governments in the region to develop or implement national action plans on women and peace and security and to train security forces to prevent and respond to sexual violence; and the current capacity of the United Nations field presence to work on gender equality in the context of the crisis, coordinate among the various parts of the Organization and ensure that the leadership took up those issues in its interactions with the key decision makers.

The presenters highlighted that the correlation between the sharp gender inequalities and the conflict in the region went beyond the abduction of some 7,000 women and girls by Boko Haram, including the well-publicized kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls, and the increasing use of female suicide bombers by the terrorist group. The areas affected by the conflict had vastly different rates of fertility, maternal mortality, girls' enrolment in education and representation of women in political life.

Nigeria had a national action plan on women and peace and security and the other countries in the region were at various stages of developing and adopting similar plans. A recent review of the Nigerian national action plan, however, had revealed gaps and weaknesses. It did not, for example, take into consideration some issues that subsequently emerged as inherent to the conflict, from violent extremism to post-conflict demobilization and reintegration. Relevant stakeholders were not familiar with the plan and the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development had had difficulties in coordinating with or obtaining information from other key ministries. The lack of resources allocated to those national plans continued to hamper their implementation. The presenters emphasized the need for national and regional actors to make better use of women mediators, noting that, in Nigeria, the Ministry had been included among the key entities in the interministerial task force assigned to coordinate the Government's response to the humanitarian emergency. Recently, the United Nations had supported efforts to deploy women among the

human rights monitors in the affected areas and the Government had responded to allegations of sexual and gender-based violence in camps for internally displaced persons by deploying 100 female police officers to help to curb and address those abuses and ensure better access to services by victims of sexual violence.

With regard to prevention and early warning, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel had been working with the Gender Development Centre of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), whose second regional action plan on women and peace and security had been launched on 10 February, in order to introduce indicators to monitor sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking in persons and other gender-related incidents and to include that information in the quarterly reports of the ECOWAS early warning system. Civil society organizations contributed to the collection of that information, but were systematically underresourced. There was also a lack of synergy between some of the largest women's networks in the region, such as the Mano River Women's Peace Network, the Network on Peace and Security for Women in the ECOWAS Region and the Sahel Women Platform.

The challenges in protecting women and girls were alarming. On one hand, there were thousands of women who had been victims of abductions, sexual slavery, forced recruitment, forced labour, forced marriage and other abuses but, on the other, many victims were unwilling to return to their communities because of stigma or suffered secondary displacement because they could not gain access to their communities when they attempted to return or lacked access to the most basic services. One main issue with the reintegration of former combatants or persons associated with Boko Haram was that many children, some under 5 years of age, were detained for "screening" in deplorable conditions because their mothers, many of them adolescent girls themselves, were also detained. The Civilian Joint Task Force in Nigeria had been listed alongside Boko Haram in the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict because of its recruitment of children. The Government had begun to provide greater access to detention and transit sites and to collaborate with international actors on ensuring adequate treatment, interrogation, release and family tracing and reunification. In the past year in Nigeria, there had been 43 cases of sexual violence allegedly perpetrated by security guards, army officers, camp officials, members of the Civilian Joint Task Force and vigilantes. In December 2016, nine officers reportedly had been arrested and were currently standing trial. Just 2 per cent of the survivors of gender-based violence who sought medical care were able to gain access to it. In addition, it was estimated that almost half of all survivors declined to report sexual violence. In camps for internally displaced persons, women and girls often felt uncomfortable reporting to National Emergency Management Agency representatives, who were generally men.

Recommendations by the participants and the secretariat of the Group included:

(a) Request that the report on the visit by the Security Council include details on the role of women and gender analysis in the response to the crisis and raise those issues not only in meetings with women's groups, but also in meetings with all key interlocutors;

(b) Suggest stronger language on broader women and peace and security issues in subsequent outcome documents of the deliberations of the Security Council on the region;

(c) Solicit information from the subsidiary bodies of the Security Council, such as the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh),

Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism, on the integration of a gender perspective, for example in their visits, assessments, technical support and listings of individuals;

(d) Ensure that special political missions covering the countries in the region include more detailed information and analysis on women and peace and security in their briefings to the Security Council;

(e) Ensure that national and regional strategies recognize survivors of sexual violence as victims of terrorism, so that they would benefit from the appropriate assistance;

(f) Highlight the need for support and reinforcement by national and international partners in key areas, including cross-border judicial cooperation to enhance both assistance to survivors and accountability efforts; addressing stigma for survivors and their children; training for security forces, in particular the Multinational Joint Task Force, on their treatment of and interaction with survivors; and provision of basic services, including sexual and reproductive health and education, as an important component of the humanitarian response;

(g) Consider developing a regional strategy to engage with women's civil society organizations and facilitate their interaction with regional bodies, including the Multinational Joint Task Force and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, through the establishment of, for example, a women's situation room for the entire region and the deployment of gender advisory expertise to the Task Force.